

Idaho Wolf Management Progress Report

April 27 – May 2, 2008

Monitoring

Early spring conditions continue keeping wolves in lower elevations mostly along winter range later than usual this year, providing more opportunity for wolves to be in close proximity to cattle calving operations around private ground.

Jason Husseman, Idaho Fish and Game biologist, retrieved a chewed off radio collar from a female wolf in the East Fork of the Salmon River. This is her second radio collar she had chewed off and Jason figures that unless he finds radio collar armor plating, he likely won't place another.

Michael Lucid and Laura Robinson are still working in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness attempting to radio collar wolves for monitoring purposes. Snow and ice are still along the trails normally open this time of year. A pack bridge is out also restricting horse access from Moose Creek upriver. Once again, the wilderness wolves are avoiding their traps, as none have yet been collared.

Control

On 4/27, USDA Wildlife Services (WS) confirmed that a wolf killed a ewe and a lamb on private land SE of Midvale. Control efforts to remove the offending animal are ongoing.

On 4/29, WS captured and killed a sub adult gray female wolf near the depredation site where wolves killed 2 sheep on private land near Horseshoe Bend last week. Control efforts are complete unless another depredation is confirmed.

On 5/1, a WS fixed wing aircrew was able to remove two gray female wolves (1 adult, 1 sub-adult) from the Double Springs pack near the depredation site where they killed a calf last week on private land in the Pahsimeroi. Control efforts are complete unless another depredation is confirmed.

On 5/1, WS investigated a reported wolf depredation on a calf on private land near Kooskia. While wolves had fed on the carcass, there was no indication that the calf was a victim of predation.

Management

Carter Niemeyer (IDFG) talked to several Lowman residents about wolves near their homes, how to reduce conflict, and what the new state law allows. Carter trained the individuals in the use of nonlethal munitions (rubber bullets and cracker shells), and discussed other nonlethal options as well as when lethal control could be used. Evidently the community has been feeding deer and the wolves have been hanging close by as a result.

Many reporters have been asking for the total wolf mortality numbers since delisting and whether the number is higher under state management than under federal management. We have been seeing an annual increase in depredations and resultant wolf control actions every

year since reintroductions under federal authority correlated to higher wolf populations and wolves establishing activity on private land with high conflict potential. Following are the final tally for April wolf depredations and control actions.

Year	April Confirmed Depredations	Wolves Controlled
2005	1	0
2006	3	0
2007	6	4
2008	15	10

This year early spring conditions are keeping wolves at lower elevations during peak cattle calving and lambing seasons as well. All but one depredation report received has occurred on private land at low elevations. Many are occurring in areas we have not historically had high levels of depredations including Council/Cambridge area, Horseshoe Bend, Lemhi, Pahsimeroi, Ashton, Mt. Home and other locations on private ground far from core wolf areas. From March 28 – April 30 we have recorded 20 mortalities: 12 lethal controls by USDA Wildlife Services for confirmed livestock depredations, 2 illegal takes, 3 control under the state law §36-1107 by livestock producers, 2 vehicle collisions, and 1 natural mortality. Two of the above wolves were killed by a livestock owner near Ashton, Idaho under §36-1107, after the owner saw the wolves stalking his livestock. The incident was investigated by IDFG conservation officers and a report filed with the local prosecutor, who determined that no charges should be filed against the livestock owner.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has scheduled a series of public open house meetings around the state to seek comments on the proposed 2008 wolf hunting season framework. The meetings will be announced by regional offices. The proposed seasons and rules are available at all Fish and Game offices and on the Fish and Game Website at: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/public/>.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission approved the Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan, and the gray wolf in the Northern Rocky Mountains was removed from the endangered species list – both in March. The plan calls for managing wolves at a population level of between 500-700 wolves for the first five years following delisting. The plan includes hunting as part of the methods of maintaining the population levels.

Fish and Game recommendations call for a total mortality quota of 328 wolves in 2008, which includes all reported wolf kills – from natural causes, accidents, wolf predation control actions and hunter kills. Reaching the quota would result in an estimated end-of-year population of 550-600 wolves. When the statewide quota is reached, all hunting would stop. When quotas in individual zones are reached, hunting in those zones would stop.

Details for the fall 2008 hunting season are scheduled to be set by the commission at the May 21-22 meeting and season and rules brochures should be out to the public in July.

Fish and Game has set this schedule for wolf rule setting:

- April 30 – May 16 - Public review and comment period.
- May 16 - Summaries of regional public comments and final regional recommendations are due to Fish and Game headquarters.

- May 21-22 - Idaho Fish and Game Commission scheduled to consider wolf hunting rules and seasons during meeting at Jerome Fish and Game office.

Comments on the proposed seasons and rules may be submitted at regional public meetings or to regional offices; they may be submitted at the Fish and Game Website at:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/public/>; or they may be sent by mail to Wolf Hunting Rules, Idaho Fish and Game, P.O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83709.

On April 28, a lawsuit was filed in Federal Court in Missoula to prevent delisting. The state of Idaho is planning on intervening on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Information and Education

On 4/19/08, Marcie Carter (NPT reservation biologist and former wolf project member) gave a wolf biology/ecology talk at the Earth Day Fair sponsored by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Approximately 20 people attended her presentation.

Dave Spicer (IDFG) gave a wolf question and answer session at "Earth Day Fair" in Coeur d'Alene on Saturday, April 19th, 25 to 30 people attended.

Carter Niemeyer (IDFG) gave presentations to three high school zoology and biology classes at Valley High School in Nampa on April 29. He presented information on careers in wildlife management with emphasis on wolf biology, ecology and management. About 60 students attended with good participation and questions.

We also would like to remind people that when wolves are in the area, please be aware that they may attack or injure dogs. It often helps to keep dogs in kennels or inside buildings at night and to not let them roam freely when humans are not around. When fresh wolf sign is found, place dogs on restraints and keep supervised. The state law allows individuals to harass or kill a wolf attacking or molesting their domestic animals including pets. If you are having concerns or problems with wolves close to your residence, please inform the Fish and Game Office nearest you.

Please help us manage wolves by reporting wolf sightings on our Fish and Game observation form found at: http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/wolf_report/

Wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains (NRM) were delisted on March 28, 2008. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service successfully recovered and delisted the population with the help of state, federal, tribal and non government partners. Management of these wolves now resides with the states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The 2002 legislatively approved Wolf Conservation and Management Plan along with the March 2008 Idaho Fish and Game Wolf Population Management Plan, as well as the laws and policies of the state now govern wolf management in Idaho. Wolves are now listed as a big game animal in Idaho and protected under the laws and policies of the State of Idaho.

Once wolves were delisted, the USFWS decided to discontinue the publication of the NRM wolf weekly. Instead, for the time being, Idaho will continue publishing the Idaho specific wolf weekly. Along with the USFWS, contributors to the weekly historically have included the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the states of Idaho and Montana. Wyoming was reported on by the USFWS. You may review past wolf weekly publications on our wolf webpage and links along with all pertinent and updated wolf information and publications at:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/wolves/>